

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, April 2, 1909

Beinn Bhreagh, near Baddeck, Nova Scotia April 2, 1909. Mrs. A. Graham Bell, 1331 Conn. Ave., Washington, D.C. Dear Mabel:

"Richards himself again". Only one day has been needed to recover from the Ottawa trip.

We had quite a pathetic little meeting on Wednesday March 31, 1909, when the remains of the Aerial Experiment Association — Douglas, Casey and I, with Kathaleen, Mabel McCurdy and Mr. Cox, watched the hands of the clock go round towards the hour that marked the expiration of the Association. We could not allow it to expire by itself so one minute before midnight Casey moved the final adjournment, Douglas seconded it and I put it formally to a vote. We had hardly received the response "aye" when the first stroke of midnight began. I do not know how the others felt but to me it was really a dramatic moment. All that remains of the A. E. A. now is the trustee.

The trustee is the link connecting the past of the Association with its future. What that future shall be has given us all concern. The trustee has full power to do anything he thinks best in our interests and I am now sending him a few thoughts approved by the A. E. A. members present here. We propose that a Joint Stock Company should be formed consisting of the members of the A. E. A. together with Mr. E. A. Selfridge and yourself. Then all that the trustee will have to do will be to hand over the property of the A. E. A. to this Company and 2 to divide the proceeds (viz. the shares) in accordance with the resolutions and agreements of the A. E. A.

I shall soon be down in Washington where I can talk over the etails of the proposed Company with Charlie and have it started. My idea is that we should copy substantially the steps that we adopted in introducing the graphophone to commercial use. The first

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Company organized did not come into existence for the purpose of manufacturing graphophones but for the purpose of securing patents upon the graphophones of the Volta Laboratory Association. It formed the parent company for holding the inventions together and provided a means for distributing the proceeds (in the form of shares) among the Volta Laboratory Associates.

Following out this idea our parent company should be organized with capital sufficient to take out patents in the United States and others countries on the inventions of the Aerial Experiment Association and to protect the licensees of the company.

Then this company should proceed either to organize aerodrome companies to take up the manufacture of aerodromes, under its patents, or to license individuals in the different countries. Its success will depend upon its success in obtaining patents. We already have two patents under way, one of which has been already filed in the Patent Office. We will soon be able to see what hope there may be of obtaining patents in other countries by the reception of these applications by the U. S. Patent Office. While these applications are being considered by the Patent Office I personally am responsible for the costs and steps can be taken with Charlie's assistance to organize a company to relieve my me from responsibility and to consider how far it might be advisable to apply for patents in other countries or to apply for U. S. patents on other points than those covered by the present applications.

If we had a company organized to hold the inventions together and patents that amounted to anything we would then license individuals or companies to manufacture under our patents.

A considerable time, however, must necessarily elapse before we can know the fate of our present applications and before a parent company can be organized and in the meantime Curtiss in the United States and Douglas and Casey in Canada are anxious to go ahead with the practical manufacture of aerodromes.

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If they themselves had not been members of the Aerial Experiment Association no difficulties would be experienced for as we have no patents there is nothing to prevent anyone from going ahead anywhere and buildour machines for their own profit without any reference to the Aerial Experiment Association.

As they were, however, members of the Association a feeling of equity would dictate that they should respect the rights of the Association until sufficient time has elapsed to show whether patents can or can not be secured. The probable outcome will be that Curtiss in the United States and Douglas and Casey in Canada will commence upon the manufacture of aerodromes and will make arrangements with the trustee of the A. E. A. or with any company that may succeed the trustee by which they will recognize the A. E. A. by paying 4 to the trustee or to the company a royalty upon any machines they manufacture utilizing the inventions belonging to the A. E. A. as defined in the claims of the present applications.

I have proposed that this voluntary recognition of the A. E. A. should last only for a reasonable time, say two years, sufficient to enable the company to secure patents. If no patents can be obtained then no reason would exist for their continuing to recognize the Association. If, on the other hand, patents should be secured then the parent company should license them to cintinue the manufacture under their patents.

My idea is that it would be equitable for Curtiss, Douglas and Casey in manufacturing aerodromes covered by the claims of our applications to pay over to the trustee of the A. E. A. or to the company succeeding him 10% of the purchase price of the aerodromes leaving 90% to cover the expenses of manufacturing and their own profit; but of course this would be a matter of arrangement with the trustee who knows more about the business matters than I. Some voluntary arrangement of this sort would give them freedom to go ahead and do what they choose and yet recognize the rights of the A. E. A. during the critical period of uncertainty whether we have or have not anything to show which we

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are legally entitled. Two years will be a sufficient time for this interregnum of affairs. By the expiration of that period we will know where we are.

It is specially desirable that some arrangement of this sort should be made at once in the case of Curtiss because he is now entering on the manufacture of aerodromes without any agreement or understanding as to his relation to the old A. E. A.

Things look very hopeful for Douglas and Casey. After the conversation that I have held with His Excellency Earl Grey and with Mr. Fielding, Canadian Minister of Finance, there can be no doubt that both the Canadian Government and the British Government will afford encouragement and assistance to the manufacture of aerodromes within the British Empire or Canada by British subjects or Canadians.

Mr. Fielding, of course, cannot commit himself definitely but I hold it as practically certain that if Douglas and Casey manufacture aerodromes within the Dominion of Canada that the Canadian Government will assist them by purchasing an aerodrome from them providing it does not involve an appropriation much exceeding \$10,000. Mr. Fielding cross-questioned me as to the expense incurred in making the aerodromes we have constructed. I told him that we had expended \$35,000 on our five aerodromes and he could form his own conclusions. I heard His Excellency Earl Grey asking Mr. Fielding whether these aerodromes would cost \$100,000 and Mr. Fielding replied "No, somewhere about \$10,000 apiece." I feel so perfectly certain that the Canadian Government and the British Government will take this matter up in a practical way that I have suggested to Casey and Douglas the advisability of their forming a partnership for the manufacturing of aerodromes and going right ahead and making an aerodrome that they think would prove of value to the British Army. Then when they have completed it and made certain that it will fly and do all that they want it to do, offer it to the Canadian Government. I feel perfectly sure that the Canadian Government will purchase it even if they don't need it for the purpose of helping the establishment of a new industry in Canada. They will understand that the purchase of this first machine will enable these Canadians to go ahead and make

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other machines in Canada and thus establish a Canadian industry. Whereas if they don't purchase it they know it would be offered to the British Government with the likelihood that the infant industry would be transferred to Great Britain instead of remaining in Canada.

Now that the A. E. A. has expired Douglas and Casey become my assistants reverting to their status before the organization of the A. E. A. This will not prevent them from going into partnership for the manufacture of aerodromes and they can manufacture their first aerodrome in my laboratory here thus saving themselves the expense of machinery, tools, buildings, etc. It will be time enough when they have sold their first aerodrome to consider the question of separate buildings, machinery, etc., etc.

In this connection I want them to have a look at the Baddeck River valley to see whether there would be any opportunity there of unencumbered space for practical flights over land.

If so, it might be worth their while contemplating the establishment, at some future time, of an aerodrome factory near Nyanza and utilizing our falls for motive power. However this is going too far into the future. A.G.B.

P.S. I am enclosing a copy of a letter I am sending to Charlie. A. G. B.